1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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Silwa

THE VILLAGE SETTING

TABLE 1

162 **Comparison of age-group distribution of Silwa Bahari and Egypt as a whole.[1]**

Age group	*Percentage of Total Population*	
	Silwa	*Egypt*
under 5	15·0	13·3
5–9	11·9	13·9
10–14	11·2	12·0
15–19	11·1	8·5
20–29	14·5	15·2
30–39	13·9	14·6
40–49	10·5	10·1
50–59	6·1	5·9
60 and over	5·7	6·3
unidentified ages	0·2	0·2

361 Like many other villages in Upper Egypt, Silwa lies at the foot of the Eastern Plateau. This physical setting divides the villagers' world in Silwa into three distinct parts: the 'hills', the villages, and the fields. The barren [823] 'hills', with their rugged dark rocks, though a source of fear and apprehen- [241] sion to the children, are not so inhospitable for the adults who rely on the [134] salty clay (nitrous soil) found in these hills for use as land fertilizer. The [342] village itself is composed of compact houses built of sandstone, which is available in the environment. There is hardly any planning in the village 363 scheme, except for three main streets cutting across the village from east to west and another main street leading from north to south; the first three forming the main routes from the village to the fields. The rest of the by-ways between the houses are narrow and twisted and are occasionally interrupted by heaps of stones and rubble. After 1936, owing to the increase 362 of village population, a new space between the old village and the railway line was allotted free by the government for building purposes. Most of this space has been built upon and inhabited mainly by those married sons whose parental homes have not sufficient room for their accommodation. 361 However, the finest buildings in the village are the two mosques. With [346] whitewashed walls, elegant and dignified minarets, and a floor covered with mats, these mosques represent one of the most cohesive forces in the [182] life of the villagers – religion.

[1] Here the percentages in Silwa are worked out from the figures given for 1947, but those of Egypt from the figures of 1937. Thus one could assume that the percentages of age groups have not radically changed. On the other hand, there are no details about age groups in Silwa in the 1937 Census.

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neighbours in the field, where a small lamb or goat is killed in the field and cooked, on this occasion, by the men, while the women send the children with bread to the farm for the meal. It must be noticed that on this occasion, as well as at most communal meals, meat is served in one dish and is divided by one member or two amongst the participants. Such a meal will be followed by somebody standing up to invoke God's blessing —'baraka'—in the new harvest, as well as mercy on the deceased ancestors. Indeed Robertson Smith's remark is applicable to this community. 'The act of eating and drinking together is the solemn and stated expression of the fact that all who share the meal are brethren and that the duties of friendship and brotherhood are implicitly acknowledged in their common act.'[1]

To sum up, the village is a community of small landowners, who, irrespective of the size of their holdings, consider their land to be the basis of their livelihood and security and to be a possession for which they have great emotional attachment. There is no appreciable functional differentiation in occupations; hence, the amount of skill and knowledge required for livelihood is almost identical. In spite of a great deal of economic self-sufficiency in the peasant or rural community, and of reliance on subsistence crops, the inhabitants are still dependent on outside forces for the price of their crops and for the sale of manufactured goods and textiles. Moreover, with a population pressure, more and more of the village members have reluctantly left to seek livelihood in towns and cities and to take up work as caretakers and domestic servants. On their return to the village, such groups of people bring with them some of the town atmosphere, considering themselves 'masrawia' (been to the city). They sometimes consider themselves more refined, and are usually elegantly dressed, even adopting a different accent. Such mobility is definitely beginning to challenge in some measure the traditional stability and conventional behaviour.

In spite of the increasingly impinging forces of city life and the admiration of the villagers for city ways, the small landowners still uphold and maintain the vested common interest in favour of the traditional ways of life, symbolized in the dignity of farm-work compared to other occupations, in the importance of family unity and honour of ancestry, in the religious ethic based on contentment and abhorrence of pleasure-seeking, and in social sensitivity to shame-provoking situations.

Furthermore, the feeling of equalitarianism is so striking in this community that any schematic class-division is very difficult to apply to its social structure. Here again, irrespective of their landholdings, they all eat from their hand produce consisting mainly of bread and the same varieties of home-grown vegetables; they live in similar dwellings, built of stone, dried mud and palm trunks, constructed by the village masons

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, London, 1894, p. 265.

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and evidencing practically no difference in architecture, style or number of storeys, as there are no two-storey houses in the village. Members of each sex dress more or less alike, and the observing of this convention is a very important factor in social equality. Their maxim in this connection is 'Eat what you yourself like, but dress according to what others like'. Yet all this does not mean that they are entirely identical, and the differences are usually in quantity and not in kind. The headman of the village—'Omda'—may have more clothes than others, but his clothes are the same type of clothes tailored in the same style; he may have a larger house than his neighbour but both are built in the same style with the same kind of furniture, the same sanitary arrangements and cooking facilities. The villagers do not divide themselves into 'the rich' and 'the poor'. Strengthening this sense of equalitarianism are the kinship ties where all the members of the village are inextricably connected with each other by family ties and obligations, this being reinforced by the sense of brotherhood amongst Moslems as enjoined upon them by the Koran.

With respect to the position of children in the village, they are certainly considered as an economic asset from the age of five. They constitute the labour-force in a community where hired labour is very difficult to procure. With not many expenses needed for their upbringing, and with the tangible labour they undertake, the burden of rearing children is offset; for although they are consumers, they are, even more so, contributors to the family resources. Children are also a means of providing parents with leisure and prestige, and every new child provides his or her older sibling with more opportunities for respite and leisure. Their economic contributions are enlisted by a gradual process of training, first through actual help in the farm activities, this being followed by the assignment of specific tasks to them, according to their age and physical abilities.

It must also be emphasized that these conditions and attitudes obtain in a village of small landholders. It is a matter for enquiry to find whether the same conditions prevail in villages where large-size ownership of the 'landed gentry' is the basis of economic life. It must be remembered that distribution of land in Egypt shows a great deal of unevenness. Out of 5,857,258 feddans of cultivable land in 1942, 2,160,219 feddans were owned by 12,103 persons out of the total number of owners amounting to 2,550,579. Of these owners 93 per cent held less than 5 feddans each and were in possession of only 31 per cent of the land. In 1939, owners of plots over 20 feddans constituted but 1·5 per cent of the total number of landowners, and these possessed just over 50 per cent of the total land.[1]

This system of land ownership in Egypt has nothing to do with legal Islamic institutions, apart from the Islamic law of inheritance. Such maldistribution of land is mainly due to the Ottoman regime and the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Land Code of 1858 and Land Registration Law of

[1] See *Pocket Census of Egypt*, 1948. Wendell Cleland, 'A Population Plan for Egypt', in *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, 1939.

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good as the village reciter, this being justified on the grounds that the 'village girl is always one-eyed'. Introduction of cash crops like sugar-cane and cotton has caught on for the same reasons as landlords who can afford to live in the city grow such crops. Emulation of city standards for social prestige is obvious in the example of those few people who white-washed their houses mainly on the outside but seldom inside, in contrast to the dark grey colour of mud, the ordinary house coating. The same whitewash with inscriptions from the Koran concerning pilgrimage, crude paintings of camels, and mahmal procession also form the outside decoration of the houses of pilgrims made immediately after their return from Mecca.

While some articles of men's wear or some parts of their speech have been affected by city ways, women's dress and language have hardly been affected at all. This is partly due to their relative restriction of movement and travel compared with men. On some occasion, there was a commotion in the village concerning the spread of city headgear among the women. This led to their nightly itinerary to fill their jars from the Nile being stopped for a while, as the men complained that women made it an occasion for displaying their colourful headgear.

The villagers appreciate the fact that city dwellers are much more inclined to mind their own business and engage in no gossip. Their attitude towards gossip is, however, paradoxical. It is considered sinful to talk about somebody behind his back; the Koran condemns it, and the Prophetic Tradition warns against it as 'gossip eats up the good deeds as the fire eats up wood'. Much of the village preacher's advice in the Friday sermon is on the avoidance of gossip and the use of the human tongue which could be like the scorpion's tail. Yet on the other hand, the villagers in their formal and informal gatherings occupy themselves with talking about the doings, the problems, the quarrels, and the general business of other people. They will tell you that they are engaged in just having a mouthful of words, or just chewing the cud. It is well known that gossip is almost an institution in rural areas, partly informative, partly interpretive, and on the whole functions as a means of social control and a medium for the formation of public opinion. In this connection, my informant Ali told me that townspeople have more scope for piety, as the occasions for gossip do not arise as among the people of Silwa.

One of the main things that a small number of enlightened villagers are aware of is the fact that in the cities people can find more religious enlightenment as to what are the principles of pure religion in distinction from religion mixed with pre-Islamic customs (Jahilyia), which they think are prevalent in the village. On enquiring about examples of the supremacy of the chances of the city dwellers over the villagers in this respect, most of the information elicited concerned religious ritual. Ali, as well as other persons, stated that city people know how to perform their ablutions better, how to say their prayers in a more acceptable way, and have no mourning

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[584] repeated by the girl's father: 'I have married my daughter X to Y accepting the payment on which the people of the two sides concerned have agreed in the manner prescribed by the Holy Book and the Way of the Prophet.' The contract was then signed by the two fathers as well as another witness for each side.[1] This was followed by the reading of the 'Fatiha' and [583] the giving of the marriage-payment (mahr) to the bride's father. In this case the amount was ten pounds paid in advance and two pounds to be paid later. According to the village practice, the payment always consists of two parts; the greater part (usually three-quarters of the total) is paid over after writing the contract and is called 'mugaddam' (in advance), [586] while the other, called 'muakhar' (the delayed), is only payable in case of divorce. All these procedures in the ceremony described here were followed, as usual, by a specially prepared meal ending with the reading of the 'Fatiha' and a prayer to God that He might help in making this marriage successful and fruitful. While all this was taking place, the girl's mother and her female relatives, but not the boy's mother or his female relatives, were singing and uttering their joy-cries now and again. The 'maazoon' then left with his money gift from the bridegroom's father and sugar and corn from the bride's family. Thus the ceremony of 'agreement' (tibah) ended.

The agreement between the two families was followed by their fixing [585] the 'night of marriage' (lailat addukhla), and this followed a fortnight later.[2] In the meanwhile, the bridegroom took his weekly presents to the [431] girl's house on the market day. These presents usually consist of meat, sweets, fruit and similar delicacies. The girl's mother returned the handkerchief on the basket in which these gifts were sent with presents of pigeons and flour. During his visits in this period, the boy, as expected, was not allowed to see the girl, being usually met by the mother and father. During this period also the girl's family were preparing her house and [342] decorating it. They had to build an extra room, and thus the newly-weds' apartment consisted of two rooms, one with a completely covered roof with only two small holes as windows, while the front room was half-covered. This is a typical way of building a house in Silwa, making the inner room for use in winter and the outer for summer. At the same time, the girl's family were getting together her jewellery, by buying bits and borrowing others.

The boy's family bought an outfit for the girl composed of two black

[1] According to Islamic Law there must be two witnesses for each side to sanction the marriage. It must be noted here that the writing of the contract at this stage is not like an engagement; it is religiously binding as if actual marriage had taken place. If the bride or the bridegroom happens to die immediately after the contract, the surviving partner is entitled to have a share in any property.

[2] It literally means 'the night on which the bridegroom enters in unto the bride'. It must also be noted here that Moslems regard marriage as essentially a civil contract, the validity of which depends only on the agreement of both sides. See Westermarck, *Marriage Ceremonies in Morocco*, London, 1914.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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peacemaker arrives in time a serious disturbance can usually be avoided.

The accounts given in subsequent chapters of blood-feuds, inter-village fights, and other crimes of violence should not, however, cause the reader to pass too harsh a judgment on the Egyptian peasants if he will but bear in mind that the violent contrasts in the physical features of the country are reflected in the psychology of the inhabitants collectively and individually.

The *felläḥīn* form the bulk of the population of Egypt, and the

FIG. 4. A VILLAGE ON THE BANKS OF THE BAḤR EL-YŪSUF

larger number of them are Muslims. The Copts, who at one time were far more numerous than they are at the present day, are scattered about all over the country, though in a few towns and villages they may form the greater part of the population. The word 'Copt,' it must be borne in mind, does not denote a racial, but rather a religious, distinction.

The Beduins (Arabic *Bedu*, singular *Bedawī*), many of whom still lead a more or less nomadic desert life, and the Arabs, who have settled down as cultivators of the soil, also form a not inconsiderable portion of the population. Their facial features and certain styles of dress distinguish them from the native inhabitants. Nubians, Sudan negroes, Turks, Greeks, Syrians, and Jews are also to be found in large numbers, the four latter peoples chiefly in Lower Egypt, though they do not altogether confine themselves

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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times the pigeon-houses are painted with simple white designs. This is done, so I was told in one or two villages, because the birds like it, and it draws them back to their own houses! Pigeons are kept chiefly for the sake of the dung, which is considered to be a valuable fertilizer for the fields. Probably, however, more harm than good is done to the crops by the breeding of these birds, for they accumulate in large flocks when the corn is ripening, and are with difficulty dispersed by men and boys armed with slings and stones.

FIG. 6. A VILLAGE HOUSE OF THE BETTER SORT

The houses of the peasants, in many cases mere hovels, are made of crude bricks, sometimes covered over with mud plastering. In the better houses (see Fig. 6) there is generally a flight of steps leading to an upper story, where there may be a sitting-room (*mandareh*), furnished with benches (called *dikak*, singular *dikkeh*), which are covered with rugs and supplied with cushions. The room in which the foodstuffs are kept is also usually in this upper story. The flat roof (Fig. 7) is a pleasant place on which to sit and watch the life in the streets below; it also serves as a hen-run, dog- and cat-run, a drying-ground, and is put to other utilitarian purposes. Here, for example, are stored huge bundles of sticks and dry maize-stalks (called *būṣ*), together with quantities of cakes of cow- and buffalo-dung, neatly stacked in rows, which are used

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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with the sticks or *būṣ* as fuel. Here, too, are set up the household granaries.

The houses, especially the better-built ones, admirably suit the Egyptian climate. There is only one thing lacking to make them really pleasant places to live in, and that is greater cleanliness within the houses themselves and without in the streets. The salvation of the people lies in the fact that they lead essentially an outdoor life, the houses being regarded almost solely as places to sleep and cook in; otherwise the mortality would be considerably higher than it is.

FIG. 7. VIEW OVER THE HOUSE-TOPS

I know how comfortable a well-kept house of the better kind can be, having lived in one for five months. This house stood on a high mound formed by the *débris* of earlier buildings; for in Egypt, when a house has collapsed or has been pulled down, the mass of rubbish is not necessarily removed, but when it has been sufficiently levelled another house is erected on the top of it. The whole of the upper floor of this house was placed at my disposal, my apartments consisting of a small bedroom and a sitting-room. The latter had two unglazed but shuttered windows, from which I could look over the tops of the neighbouring houses and be a spectator of the varied life on the roofs. Outside the rooms was a partly covered passage, from which a glorious view of the sunsets could be obtained.

The villages are intersected by narrow lanes—in most cases they

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

The villages are intersected by narrow lanes—in most cases they can hardly be dignified by the name of streets—progress along which is often impeded, sometimes almost entirely blocked, by piles of refuse and mud. In some of the larger villages there may be one or two broader streets, forming the chief thoroughfares (Fig. 8). At the side of one of the narrow lanes there may be an open space in which palm-trees grow (Fig. 9), and here the village weaver often arranges the warp for his cloth, the threads being attached to the trunks of two of the trees (Fig. 10). When this process is completed the warp is taken indoors and attached to the

FIG. 8. A VILLAGE STREET

loom, which usually stands in a somewhat dark room, with mud-coloured walls, and so small in size that it is impossible to obtain a satisfactory photograph.

Itinerant vendors ply their trades up and down these tortuous village lanes, uttering their characteristic cries. For example, the onion-seller advertises his wares by calling out, " Oh, onion, sweet as honey ! " The cries are usually intoned in a minor key, sounding to the uninitiated more like a plaintive chant than the proclamation of goods for sale. Another hawker may trade in coloured cotton cloths, printed with various designs to suit all tastes. He usually conveys his goods about on a small hand-cart. From such humble beginnings more than one fortune has been made, for the peasants are fond of hoarding their money, their daily living costing them but little. In time the small sums thus

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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carefully put by amount to a considerable total, which may be profitably invested. Thanks to a lucky deal in cotton, or some other venture, the former humble itinerant vendor finds himself well on the way to becoming a man of substance.

The house-doors are often decorated with a china plate or saucer fixed into the masonry above the lintel, as a charm against the evil eye. A house may also be decorated with coloured line-drawings of camels, boats, trains, trees, and other objects, some hardly

FIG. 9. A VILLAGE STREET

identifiable. Such artistic efforts denote that one or more members of the family inhabiting the house have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, the design representing the various objects seen by the pilgrim on his way to the sacred city.

The interiors of the villages are often very picturesque, in spite of the dirt and squalor usually found in them. The Arabs are far more particular in this respect, their villages and settlements being much cleaner in every way than those of the Egyptian peasants. This difference between the two races is so marked that I can almost always tell if a village is Arab or Egyptian directly I enter it.

A mosque is to be found in every village, and in many places

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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there are three or four such buildings. Five times a day a *mueddin* chants the call to prayer from each mosque—from the minaret if there is one—and the resonant voices of these officiants may be heard far beyond the confines of the village.

An old graveyard often stands in the middle of a village, probably indicating the older boundary, the houses built beyond it having been erected later owing to the increasing population (see below, p. 72 and Fig. 32). A whitewashed building, crowned with

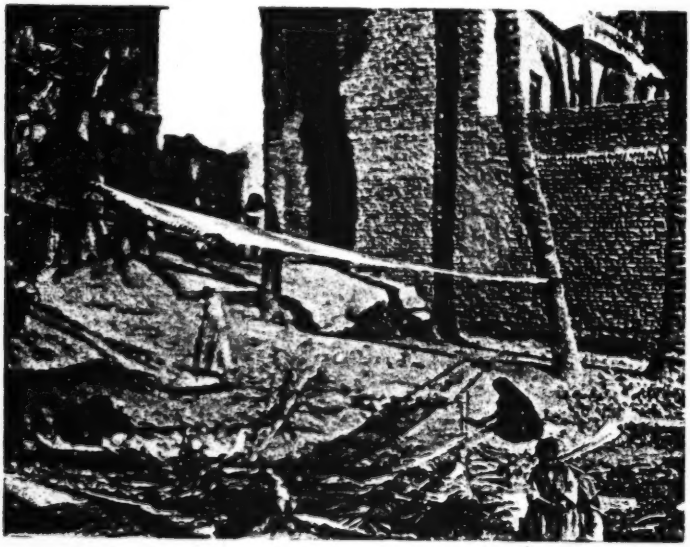

FIG. 10. WARP-THREADS ATTACHED TO PALM-TREES

a dome, stands, perhaps, on the highest point of the burial-ground, indicating the last resting-place of a sheikh, or holy man, or, at any rate, erected in his honour. Candles are usually lighted in the building on " the night of Friday "—*i.e.*, the night preceding the Friday—in commemoration of the sheikh. Such lights are, in most cases, the only illumination out of doors to guide the late wayfarer. These buildings, and there are often several in or around one village, are prominent architectural features, standing up with their whitewashed walls and domes above, and in glaring contrast to, the mud houses and hovels of the peasants.

Shops of different kinds are situated in the wider streets or lanes,

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

with open fronts which can be closed with wooden shutters when the owners are away (Fig. 11). Through the open shop-fronts the tailors are to be seen making *ǧalālīb* (long blouses; singular, *gallabīyeh*) for their customers, and in some villages one may watch the coppersmiths manufacturing bowls and jars. The vessels are hammered into shape over iron bars fixed in the ground. The iron bar is bent over at a right angle at the top, and flattened out so as to form a kind of anvil, on which the bowl or other vessel is beaten into shape.

FIG. 11. A VILLAGE STREET WITH SHOPS AND BUTCHERS' BOOTHS

Benches of bricks and mud (*maṣāṭib*, singular *maṣṭabeh*) are found outside some of the houses, and on them is usually to be seen a collection of children, fowls, goats, and even sheep, in happy promiscuity. Or perhaps a *maṣṭabeh* may be occupied solely by an old man, spinning wool, or holding a rosary in his hand and slowly passing the beads between his fingers and thumb (Fig. 12).

During harvest-time the swishing of the sticks as men and women beat the grain from the bundles of corn which they have received as wages for work in the fields,[1] resounds along the village streets.

The Yūsuf Canal (Figs. 4 and 13) flows past a village in which I have frequently resided, and there is a good deal of folklore connected with it. The water is believed to possess curative properties

[1] See Chapter X.

DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

The clothes which the man or woman wore when he or she died must be washed, and then a *fiḳīh* comes and recites passages from the Ḳorān, having the clothes close to him and one of his hands resting on them. He also recites over the place where the person died. If these precautions are not taken the *rōḥ* of the dead person cannot leave the house. When a child dies a hen is killed instead of an animal, the rest of the procedure being the same as on the occasion of the death of an older person.

I have given this information as it was repeated to me, but I

FIG. 51. STRING OF WAILING WOMEN IN A FUNERAL PROCESSION

fancy that it is really the *ʿafrīt* of the dead person that is meant in this statement, not the *rōḥ*, which is the soul, the *ʿafrīt* being the ghost, and quite separate from the *rōḥ*, according to the popular belief.[1]

The corpse is borne to the grave by four male bearers, who are constantly changed during the procession to the cemetery, for to assist in thus carrying the dead is considered a pious act, and he who performs it thereby acquires considerable merit. The funeral procession is headed by men, those who are relations walking as near as possible to the bier. Immediately behind the bier walk the female mourners (Fig. 51), their faces, hands, and arms dyed blue, and their heads, breasts, and arms plastered with mud ; they hold handkerchiefs, usually blue or black, and sometimes green, which they wave in the air as they give vent to their piercing

[1] See below, pp. 237 ff.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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mourning, which could easily be distinguished by the number of men seated outside it; these observed almost complete silence, instead of carrying on an animated conversation as they would have done in happier circumstances.

I was courteously received by the men and conducted to the apartment in which the women were assembled. The house was one of the type always to be found in Egyptian villages, built of crude bricks, and with steep, rough steps inside the building leading up to the roof. In the first room which we entered lay the coffin—a long, narrow box, made of planks of wood hastily nailed together, over which was stretched a covering of black cloth decorated with white crosses and other designs in *appliqué*. We passed through this room into an inner apartment, in which a large number of women were sitting on the ground, uttering from time to time piercing cries of grief. The sister of the dead man came toward me, her hair and dress dishevelled. As she advanced she swayed from side to side in a kind of dance, keeping both arms extended. She at once conducted me into a small room which led out of that occupied by the women. It was dark except for a glimmer of light which penetrated through the half-open door. A mattress was on the floor—indeed, it occupied most of the available space—and on it was stretched the body of the dead man, covered with a coloured sheet. From the end of the room, which was in pitch darkness, came the piercing cries of wailing women. Presently the sister drew aside the coverlet and invited me to take a seat on the mattress beside the dead man. This was no doubt very polite of her, but it was rather more than I could stand—not that I feared the dead, but because the mattress was almost certain to be covered with vermin. I managed to evade the offer without hurting anyone's feelings, and returned to the larger concourse of women in the adjoining room. Each of these women had a coloured handkerchief—green, blue, or purple, or some of these colours combined—such as are carried by women at all funerary ceremonies. Some of them possessed two such handkerchiefs knotted together. They held them in front of them, stretched out at full length, and as they swayed from side to side, wailing and bemoaning the dead, they would wave the handkerchiefs up and down. The faces of the women, as well as their hands and arms, were smeared with blue dye.

Presently I went out to speak to the men, who evidently dis-

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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larger granaries, which stood on the ground. They, again, were made of sun-baked clay. Many of these must have been from seven to eight or ten feet high.

Brick-making is also an important industry. The clay is mixed with chopped straw, and is prepared and kneaded as for pottery-making (see above, pp. 135, 151). So far as I know, men only are employed in this work. The bricks are shaped in a wooden mould with a handle, and are left on the ground to sun-bake (Fig. 81). Most of the houses of the *fellāḥīn*, and even some of the better-class residences, are built with these crude bricks, though the owners of the latter type of house more usually prefer to use fire-baked bricks.

FIG. 81. BRICKS LEFT TO SUN-BAKE: WOODEN MOULD WITH HANDLE IN FOREGROUND

When the walls are being built each bricklayer is assisted by a fellow-workman, who stands below and throws up to him one brick at a time (Fig. 82). I have often watched walls being built in this way, and I do not remember ever seeing a bricklayer miss a catch!

I have referred more than once in preceding chapters to fuel manufactured out of cow- or buffalo-dung. This dung is made into round, flat cakes by the women and young girls. Very young children are often to be seen in the villages, their hands and arms plastered with dung, busily engaged in making these cakes, which

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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are left on the ground to dry and harden in the sun. Every housewife is careful to see that she has always a plentiful supply of this fuel, which is neatly stacked in large quantities on the roofs of the houses.

Basket-making is a very large and important industry. Certain kinds of baskets are made in almost every village throughout the country, but a few types are characteristic of certain localities only. Many of the commoner kinds of baskets are strong and well made, but the finest work is to be found in the more southern provinces; indeed, the farther south one goes the better the workmanship. Baskets are made by both men and women, though I have found that in some localities this work tends to be monopolized by one of the sexes only; and one type of basket at least, so I was told, is made only by men. Baskets are constructed mostly out of date-palm leaves and the mid-ribs of palm-branches, but one variety in the south is made from the leaves of *dōm*-palms. These particular baskets are easily to be recognized by the shiny surface of the material employed in their manufacture.

FIG. 82. BUILDING A WALL

The commonest and one of the most useful baskets in general use is called the *maḳṭaf* (Fig. 83). It is used in field-work, for the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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293
342
291

FIG. 106. WINNOWING

293
291
465

FIG 107. A HARVESTER WITH HIS WAGES IN THE FORM OF A SHEAF OF CORN

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

787 685 to the direction in which it turned, either to the right or left, the man whose name was inscribed on the piece of paper selected was guilty or not guilty. Several of these strips of paper were tested, and two or three people whose names were written thereon were detected as the thieves. The man whose things had been stolen told me that he had all along suspected these people, but, as

[291] [342] [352]

FIG. 118. DIVINATION CEREMONY WITH THE ḲORĀN TO DETECT A THIEF

they were related to his family, he did not like to prosecute them. [152] They were the poorer members of the family, and were consequently very jealous of their richer relative. The magician employed on this occasion is renowned for his cleverness in such methods of divination, and no one would dream of doubting his decisions.

754 There is a form of black magic still practised in Egypt by means of human figures made of wax or clay. If a man desires to take his revenge on another who, he considers, has done him a grievous wrong he visits a magician and gets him to make a wax or clay

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

asked him where he had been, to which he replied, "I have been among the *'afārīt*."

Since that day he has been perfectly sane, and is now living happily in his native village.

The following is another case related to me in 1923, the incident occurring, so I was told, in 1920. In a town in Upper Egypt there dwells a somewhat celebrated Coptic magician, whom we will call the Sheikh B. He is known to be married to an *'afrīteh*, because he disappears every night, but neither his wife nor her children—for the people have discovered that she has offspring by the sheikh—are ever seen. They may come up above ground sometimes while people are talking about them, but they remain invisible.

The upper story of a certain house in this town was occupied by a Coptic clerk employed in a large business firm, while in the lower story lived a man whose wife had no children. The husband of this woman, distressed at having no offspring, begged the Sheikh B to come and see his wife, hoping that he might be able to give her some charm or read some incantation which would cure her barrenness. Accordingly, one evening, at a late hour, the magician arrived.

The occupant of the upper story was in the habit of praying every night and morning. On the evening on which the Sheikh B arrived this man was reciting some of the Psalms of David in a loud voice. On hearing these recitations the Sheikh B cried out, "Oh, make this man stop reading, for he is interrupting me!" Some of the people who had assembled to see the sheikh went up to beg the man to stop reciting. However, he paid no attention to their request, and read through all the Psalms, repeating them in a loud voice, so that they could easily be heard in the rooms beneath him.

The Sheikh B then cried out to him, "Oh, stop reciting these Psalms, you have burnt one of my sons"; for the sheikh had brought up many *'afārīt* from under the earth, including his own sons, so that he might consult them as to what should be done for the childless woman.

Finally the clerk went to bed; but as soon as he had laid himself down he felt that there were people in the room, and suddenly found himself being lifted off the bed. He opened his eyes, and saw four small *'afārīt*, dressed in quaint coats and trousers of many

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

Before people take up residence in a newly built house, or complete a well for a water-wheel, or use new machinery for irrigation or grinding corn, an ox or a sheep, or, if the people are poor, a fowl, must be killed on the threshold of the house, or close to the engine, or inside the well before the water-level is reached. This is done in case these spots may be haunted by *'afārīt*, who will trouble the owners if not first appeased by the blood of a sacrifice.

Within a year three people were killed by the irrigation machinery

FIG. 137. THE MOTHER OF THE BOY WHO WAS KILLED WAILING OUTSIDE THE 'OMDEH'S ENGINE-HOUSE

belonging to the *'omdeh* of the village mentioned on p. 235 (see also Fig. 137). One, a woman, was killed not long before I arrived there, a boy was caught in the machinery and killed during my visit, and a man was killed in a similar way just after I had left. This *'omdeh* had made no sacrifice before using the engine, so a number of the villagers went to him and demanded that he should kill an ox on the spot. This he did, about a month after I had gone, and some of the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the engine. Apparently this has appeased the *'afārīt*, for I have heard of no accidents since the sacrifice was made!

There is an old Copt in that village, considerably over ninety

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

796
769

FIG. 142. MŪLID OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK: SCENE IN THE PALM-GROVE

[443]
[342]

FIG. 143. VENDORS' BOOTHS AT A SHEIKH'S MŪLID

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
Coptic MR10

F 796 769

managed to secure a good photograph of them and of their bearers as they stood grouped under the sheikh's tree together with a few musicians and the inevitable crowd (Fig. 145).

These *mawālid*, when well conducted, are quite harmless, and are one of the very few pleasurable excitements enjoyed by the peasants. Most of those at which I have been present have been quite orderly, but much depends on the officer in charge of the district in which

F [625]

F [291] [342]

FIG. 145. SHEIKH'S BANNERS AND THEIR BEARERS

they are being held. If he is neglectful, and does not see that order is kept and objectionable shows prohibited, the festivals can degenerate into anything but wholesome recreation for the people.

The modern Egyptian *mawālid* show striking resemblances to English fairs, especially as celebrated during the Middle Ages and on into the seventeenth century. These too were associated in every case with a saint, and also with trading. Our modern fairs, though often still named after the saints in whose honour they were originally held, have now lost their religious significance.

F [171]
C F

A monastery in Middle Egypt situated on the high-desert edge, which at this spot approaches close to the Yūsuf Canal, is one of a number dedicated to Māri Girgis, our St George (Fig. 146). The

346 792

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE VILLAGE STORY-TELLER

"O my son, you are a camel. How can you marry the daughter of a king?" Then he said, "Never mind. I am going to give you a golden tray and also cups of gold, and you must go to the house of the King and enter it and give them to the King's wife. If one of the doorkeepers speaks to you give him some money, but do not speak to anyone at all." 539

So the woman took the tray with the golden cups and entered the palace of the King, and placed them before his wife, and then went away without speaking a word.

The next day the camel gave his mother a beautiful table with golden dishes upon it, and said, "Go to the palace of the King and place these before his wife, but do not speak."

When the King came and saw these beautiful things he said to his wife, "If the woman comes again you must ask her what she wants."

So when the woman arrived on the third day the wife of the King said to her, "What do you want?" And she said, "I want your youngest daughter to be the wife of my son, the camel."

When the King came and heard this he was very much astonished, and he called his vizier and said to him, "How can I give my daughter to a camel? We must consult together on this matter for a while."

Then the vizier said to the King, "I think that the camel must be a rich and noble man, for he sends you such precious things, the like of which your Majesty does not possess. I think he must be very rich and that you may give your consent. But first you must name a high price for your daughter; if he agrees well and good, we will give her to him; but if he refuses it will be better for you to deny him his request."

So, when the mother went again to the palace she was told that the King approved of her request, but as a war had broken out between the King and another country and he needed money and arms he required that the son should bring one hundred camels loaded with guns and rifles as the price of his daughter's hand.

Then the mother went home and said to her son, "O my son, the King has asked me for such and such things, and you cannot possibly obtain them, for we are very poor. Your father is only a brick-maker, and we live in a cottage made of *būṣ*.[1] Whence can we get these things?" [342]

But the camel said, "Fear not, O my mother. Stay here till I come back." Then he went out and brought a rope and hung it in the doorway of his cottage, and told his mother to take an end of the rope in her hand and to walk to the King's palace. So his mother took hold of the rope and started on her way.

As she went along a number of camels, over two hundred in number, loaded with guns and rifles, followed, and when she reached the King's palace she offered them to the vizier. Then the vizier told the King that the mother of the camel had brought more than two hundred camels,

[1] Dried *dura*-stalks.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

CHAPTER XVIII

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

I WISH to make it quite clear that in this chapter I am by no means supplying a full list of the ancient analogies with which I am acquainted. My intention is merely to give the reader some idea of the importance of this particular branch of my research. In my strictly scientific account of the *fellāḥīn*, to which I have referred in the Preface, the question of survivals will be dealt with very fully.

As I am shortly publishing a book which deals exclusively with Coptic saints and Muslim sheikhs, to be followed later by a book on modern Egyptian medicine-men and their remedies, I am here omitting all references to the numerous and important survivals connected with the cults of those saints and sheikhs, and I am only just touching on the resemblances of the modern to the ancient magico-medical prescriptions.

An ancient Egyptian town and village must have presented much the same appearance as an Upper Egyptian town and village of to-day.[1] Then as now (pp. 27 f.) the better sort of house had one or more upper stories,[2] was doubtless often whitewashed or colour-washed,[3] and had a staircase probably (as is now frequently the case) of brick, leading from floor to floor and on to the roof, where were erected exactly the same mud granaries (p. 28) as are to be seen there nowadays (see Fig. 154).

On the roof of an ancient as of a modern house were often placed two *malāḳif* (singular *malḳaf*),[4] the ventilators by means of which the north and south wind are conveyed into the house during the hot weather.

[1] See A. M. Blackman, *Luxor and its Temples* (London, 1923), p. 4; T. E. Peet and C. L. Woolley, *The City of Akhenaten*, Part I (London, 1923), p. 54 and note 1.

[2] A. Wiedemann, *Das alte Ägypten* (Heidelberg, 1920), p. 168; A. Erman and H. Ranke, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum* (Tübingen, 1923), pp. 190 ff.; W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte* (Leipzig, 1923), Pl. 60a.

[3] Nina de Garis Davies, *The Tombs of Two Officials of Tuthmosis the Fourth* (London, 1923), Pl. XXXIV, p. 30.

[4] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, pp. 205 f.; A. Wiedemann, *op. cit.*, p. 168; N. de Garis Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

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The poorer classes lived in tumbledown dwellings similar to those in which they live at the present time, as can be seen from the clay models of such houses dating from the Herakleopolitan Period (*c.* 2445–2160 B.C.).[1] Houses exactly like those of the respectable but not well-to-do *fellāḥīn* have recently been found at el-'Amarneh.[2]

The portico, so marked a feature of the better type of modern

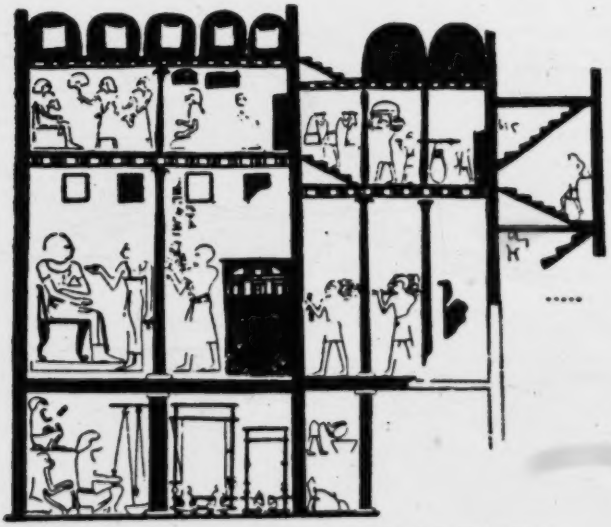

FIG. 154. AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TWO-STORIED HOUSE
After A. M. Blackman, *Luxor and its Temples*, p. 3.

house (*cf.* p. 228, Fig. 134), especially the country house or house enclosed in a garden, was no less a feature of the ancient mansions also, as can be seen from numerous representations of such belonging to different periods.[3]

FA 352

The *maṣṭabeh* outside the house-door (p. 32) was probably no less frequent in an ancient than it is in a modern Egyptian town

[A 113]

[1] H. Schaefer and W. Andrae, *Die Kunst des alten Orients* (Berlin, 1925), p. 267; W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pl. 48*b*, 2.

[2] T. E. Peet and C. L. Woolley, *op. cit.*, pp. 55 ff.; see also W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pl. 48*b*, 4.

[3] See, for example, J. Capart, *L'art égyptien*, vol. i, "L'architecture" (Brussels, 1922), Pl. 110; A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, p. 207; H. E. Winlock, "The Egyptian Expedition, 1918–1920," Part II of *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*, December, 1920, pp. 24 f.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

On p. 236 I speak of the slaying of a victim on the threshold of a new house and at the installation of a new engine or water-wheel. With this may be compared the slaying of victims—an ox and a goose—at the ceremony of laying the foundation of an ancient Egyptian temple.[1]

The unwillingness to save a drowning person mentioned on pp. 238 f. may be the last remains of an ancient belief that to be drowned was to "do the pleasure of Rē'," and that by being drowned a person was divinized, a belief to which Herodotus refers somewhat vaguely.[2] Professor Griffith wrote a very illuminating article on this subject some years ago in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*,[3] and my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, has also dealt with it at some length in his *Temple of Dendûr*.[4] It is, perhaps, to be remembered in this connexion that, according to more than one account, Osiris himself met his death by drowning.[5] Possibly the water-spirit, who apparently claimed (in the end successfully?) the foredoomed Prince,[6] is to be compared with the *'afrīt* that the modern *fellāḥīn* suppose to be claiming one who is drowning.

It is interesting to note that virtue was evidently attached to onions in ancient as it is in modern times (p. 261), for persons who took part in the procession round the walls of Memphis at the annual festival of Sokar, the funerary god of that city, had onions hung round their necks.[7] People also tied onions round their necks on the night preceding this festival.[8]

The love of listening to stories was certainly no less strong in the ancient Egyptians than it is in their descendants, as is shown by the number of folk-tales preserved to us from all periods. The existence of these stories points also to there having been professional story-tellers in antiquity as at the present day (pp. 268 ff.).[9]

[1] W. von Bissing and H. Kees, *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-woser-re*, vol. ii (Leipzig, 1923), Pl. I, Fig. 2.
[2] ii, 90. [3] Vol. xlvi, pp. 132 ff.
[4] Cairo, 1911, pp. 82 f.
[5] A. Erman, "Ein Denkmal memphitischer Theologie," in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. xliii, 1911, pp. 926 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 25, 41.
[6] T. E. Peet, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. xi, pp. 228 f.
[7] S. Sharpe, *Egyptian Inscriptions from the British Museum and Other Sources* (London, 1837–55), Part II, p. 78.
[8] H. Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1867–80), p. 295; *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum* (Leipzig, 1883–91), p. 1144; J. Duemichen, *Altaegyptische Kalenderinschriften* (Leipzig, 1866), Pl. XXVI.
[9] See A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. xxix; W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, pp. 30 f.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

243 weeks later the stalks stand higher than a man and are laden with heavy ears. It is time for harvesting. The workers, mainly women and children, pile the stalks into heaps, and then make a first sorting, throwing on one side the ears of maize, on the other the stripped stalks. The yield of a maize crop may be ten or twelve *ardebs* to the feddan, but the average for the country is seven and a half.

The stalks are now set up on end and intertwined to make a sort of circular hedge round the heaps of ears. In this open enclosure the fellaheen work day and night to strip the ears and break out the yellow grain, bigger than peas, [342 372] which they put into baskets and carry home. The stalks are also taken home on donkey back to serve as fuel or reinforcement for the roof. Nothing must be wasted.

C. Wheat

Wheat, on the other hand, has been since antiquity a traditional Egyptian crop. It is nowadays regaining some of the importance which it lost earlier to cotton, and is benefiting from the recent tendency towards greater variety of crops. In 1934 1,388,673 feddans were sown. In 1939 the area had increased to 1,466,000 feddans, which gave a total yield of 8,600,000 ardebs, or an average of 5.96 per feddan.

[262 439] Almost all the wheat is consumed in Epgyt, by middle-class Egyptians and the people in the towns. Owing to its lov percentage of gluten and record earth-content it is hardy exportable, though in 1937 Germany was negotiating purchases. Europeans and rich Egyptians prefer foreign flour, mostly imported from Australia or Canada.

[312 242] The fellah sows his wheat in November. He pays great attenton to manuring and watering up to the period of the *gaffaf*, after which he waters it only once or twice more before harvest. He harvests in April, with a primitive sickle or by hand. The crop is bound into sheaves and carried on donkey- [492] or camel-back to the communal threshing-floor, where it is untied.

Each family in turn spreads out its crop. The *gamoossa* is brought to tread out the ears of corn spread over the ground. The poorest of the fellaheen beat their corn with [407] their staves (*nabbuts*). More often several of them share a

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Chapter VII

THE FELLAH AT HOME

On his return from the East in 1932, Christian de Caters spoke as follows about the houses of the fellaheen (*Echo de Paris*, 16.6.32): "I have seen the poorest villages of a Mancha in Spain, the hovels of the Cape Verde islanders, and the reed huts of the Lundas, a savage tribe in the depths of Angola, but nowhere have I seen greater distress than in Egypt."

On the other hand, Lozach, in *Le Delta du Nil* (Cairo, 1935), finds that the fellah's home is "not far behind the stone or mud huts with a thatched roof which are still common in many parts of Central and Western Europe. It is in any case far superior to the miserable hovels in which most of the peasants of Tunisia or Algeria live".

Which statement is one to believe ? It all depends on the point of view and the standard of reference. Such comparisons are in all probability misleading, especially when the cases compared are not parallel. A personal impression or opinion is not so useful as an actual description of the fellah's home, and of his life in it. This will show us how far the house is suited not merely to the fellah but also to the land he works on.

We have seen the public parts of the village. Let us look now at the private dwellings of the fellaheen, without concerning ourselves with the big house belonging to the landowner or the residence of the *'omda*.

There are certain exceptions to be noticed first : —

1. Stone houses, which are found on the edges of the desert in Upper Egypt. The nearness of the cliffs makes it possible for the fellah to transport the stones for building in his basket. Some of these houses have a vaulted or domed roof.

2. Red-brick houses, without pointing, which are quite common in Lower Egypt. These presuppose a certain standard of living.

342 3. Houses of regular design on the model '*ezbas*', such as those of the Royal Domains, the Agricultural Society, and a few individual landowners.

4. Shapeless huts made by newcomers and semi-nomads out of rags, empty petrol tins, palm leaves and mud.

5. Fieldshelters (*zarbiya*): huts built of reeds, or mere screens of maize stalks set in the open country during the period of heavy winter work.

But these, as has been said, are exceptions; the typical fellah house, representing 92% of the total, is of earth. It is a dwelling without style or age, which is yet one more sign of the persistent uniformity of the Egyptian peasantry.

361 Let us walk into one of the alleys that wind through
342 the clustered village. On each side the narrow dun-coloured
363 houses stand wall to wall. They may be from five to ten
362 metres wide, and about two and a half metres high, or at the most five if there is an upper storey. The quarter is old, and the village older still, but the house itself is comparatively new. This is because the materials and the methods of construction make the building impermanent. Fires, and in Lower Egypt the Nile flood and the rain, have necessitated constant repairs, which soon leave little of the original structure.

181 The dwelling of the fellah, like his work, derives its character from the soil, the manner of his life, and the social environment. The fellah is housed by the same earth that feeds him. He is a man of the soil in the true sense of the word. Here it is true that matter determines form.

333 The staple building-material is a mixture of clayey soil,
331 straw (from barley, beans, or flax), cow-dung, and Nile water.
342 This may be smeared over both sides of a rough framework of maize stalks, palm leaves, or reeds, to make the mud walls of the poorest type of house. It may be poured into wooden moulds to make crude bricks (*tûb akhdar*), which are dried in the sun and then used for building. The mortar used to join them is made of the same simple mixture, and so is the plaster which sometimes covers and protects the walls.

A wall so constructed, to be strong enough, must be from twelve to eighteen inches thick. A fellah with money to spare will build on a foundation of kiln-baked bricks (*tûb ahmar*) or of limestone rubble. This prevents the damp

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that creeps up from the soil from undermining the building. 342 ●
The walls have few apertures, partly, again, to ensure stability, but also to protect the interior from heat and glare 342
by day, and against the cold and dangers of the night. 341
The doorway, which is about six feet high and three wide, is separated from the street by a shallow threshold. One or two tiny loopholes above eye level, measuring about twelve inches by eight, are the only other openings to the outside; and even these are stuffed up in winter.

This limitation of window space is due partly to the high price of wood. Egypt, lying in the sparsely wooded zone of tropical desert which stretches from India to the [137]
Sudan, is poorly supplied with wood. The date palms, sycamores, and acacias that give shade to the villages are too precious to be cut down for beams, and would in any case be insufficient to provide all the doors and windows that proper hygiene would necessitate. The trunks of date palms are certainly used, but very sparingly, since such trees bring their owners P.T. 100 a year in fruit, branches and fibre. Imported wood (from Finland, Sweden, Rumania and the U.S.S.R.), though commonly used in the towns, is beyond the normal means of the fellah. The result is that the doorway very often contains no door, and the loopholes are almost always without either glass or woodwork.

Though wood is dispensed with as far as possible, for the roof it is essential. In Upper Egypt, where it never rains, some houses remain roofless; but this is exceptional, and as a rule the four walls are at least covered with foliage. Ill-squared beams, set two feet apart, serve as a support for the interwoven stalks of maize, cotton, or reeds, together with palm branches. To prevent this construction from rotting, it is covered with rough mats and plastered with a thick layer of mud-and-cinder. This makes a terrace, which is proof against showers and solid enough in summer [513]
to support a roof-hut and the sleeping bodies of all the members of the household. The roof can be reached from outside by a wooden ladder or brick staircase; constant access is needed to the place where tools, grain reserves, fuel, and sometimes even *poultry are kept*.

The necessary habit of keeping dry brushwood and straw 372
on the roof is a frequent cause of fire, which, by reason of the 488
closeness of the houses, soon spreads to the neighbourhood 731

8

352 and toilet use there is a large flat tub (*tisht*) which serves
353 as both laundry-basin and bath, a fragment of mirror, and
296 a big wooden chest which may hold almost anything. This
515 was a gift at the betrothal, and its crude colours are reminders of a red-letter day. "In this chest near the oven, whose key the mistress of the house wears at her neck, I have seen all jumbled together eggs, pepper, cheese, rags, needles and thread, several necklaces and a packet of *kohl*." This from the letter of a surprised French missionary.

181 The close proximity of men, cattle and soil is as noticeable
356 in the fellah's house as in the field and the village. It is a reflection of the fellah's social level and manner of life. Like house, like household.

The fellah's dependence on soil, sun and water extends even to his house. He himself is of the earth, earthy, through his labour and his food, in his diseases and finally in his death. His house no less, by the material of which it is made — floor, walls, roof and all — and by its very squatness is a part of the earth.

342 The fellah lives out of doors because of the lack of
362 comfort in his home, which is no more than an unfurnished
181 sleeping-place and a store-room, a part of the crowded camp
183 which is the village.

All the houses are alike. The fellaheen have little individuality; each is an atomised unit of the mass, and his household but one cell in the agricultural hive. At the same time there is little or no space reserved for agricultural uses. The fellah works for others, and does not store the produce of the land for himself.

Yet this dwelling, which lacks so much that we deem essential, is so well adapted to its tenants and their habits that they will change or rather deform into its likeness any better-appointed house built for them on a model *'ezba*.

342 A house on an *'ezba* belongs to the owner, one in the
421 village to the fellah. House and site together are worth at the most L.E. 25. There is no rent or house tax to pay. On an *'ezba* the dwelling enters into the conditions of lease or share-tenancy. In the village it belongs to the head of the family.

592 In this homestead scarcely larger than himself the fellah leads a life of his own, no longer as a serf but as a master. Each house contains a large family, including very often, besides the father and mother, four or five children, a grand-

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654 rows there is a street six yards wide, so that sunlight can penetrate into every dwelling.

361 The houses are of red brick, with concrete ceilings,
185 and the floors inside are raised a foot above street level.
654 The roof is about thirteen feet from the ground. Twenty of
342 the houses are two-roomed, with a yard inside and a shed for cattle. Ten larger houses have three rooms, with a hall and outhouses. These are occupied by two families each, usually those of a father and his son.

[252 Six baking-ovens have been built outside the housing-
515] area, so that the smoke may not trouble the inhabitants. They are used by all the families in turn. There are also six shower-baths, four for men and two for women, together with laundry facilities.

[346] The village hall will hold seventy people; it is used for feasts, marriages and funerals. The mosque covers about 600 square feet. The school, which follows the syllabus
[347] for compulsory elementary education, is open to boys and girls. Shops have been opened in order that the people may buy what they want on the spot, and there is a great enclosure with six depots for storing the various crops, fodder for the animals, and agricultural implements.

[312] Water to fill the tanks is drawn from a well by a pumping machine. But this was an expensive experiment, costing L.E. 10,000, and could not be copied by private persons. Something more economical had to be found, which without sacrificing public health would be better adapted to the habits of the fellaheen. In 1935 the Royal Agricultural Society laid a new experiment before the landowners. Twenty houses of different kinds were built in blocks of four, separated by twenty-foot roads. Here the walls are of unbaked brick, and the roof of wood. There are two rooms about fifteen feet by twelve, a small yard, and an inside oven. Each dwelling costs L.E. 25 as against the L.E. 125 of the first plan.

654 The Government, for its part, has decided to build a
341 model village in each *mudiriya*, beginning with the rebuild-
361 ing of Mit Fares in Lower Egypt, which was destroyed by fire. The plan allows for houses of one or two stories with drinking-water and interior drainage; wide streets lined with trees; in the centre a mosque, a school, and a hall for meetings; and on the outskirts a market-place for the

Greek, not satisfied with building good houses of red brick and concrete at L.E. 120 each, has arranged for a dentist and a doctor to come every week from the town. He has established a model school, and, best of all, has engaged an assistant for social work. This young Egyptian woman, the first to hold a diploma from the Alexandria School of Social Service, lives not in the owner's villa or the *nâzer's* house but among the fellaheen and close to the school, in a little room which she has fitted up charmingly. At 8 a.m. she opens her dispensary, and at 9 a.m. pays a medical visit to the school. Then she makes a round of the houses, gently discouraging dirt and disorder. She keeps a card-index of each family, and records its progress. She brings the girls together for lessons in child-welfare and sewing, and in the evening assembles the men to tell them stories and teach them how to amuse themselves in their spare time.

At the end of the first year, thanks to the fact that this service was continuous and close at hand, the women of the *'ezba* were washing themselves once a week, though they used only to take a bath once a year. This is because Doreyya did not make speeches to them about bath-tubs and shower-baths, but simply used what every peasant woman has at hand in her home, the *tisht*, the *halla* and the *kûz*.

Then there is the earlier example of a remarkable *ab'adiya* (isolated farm) in the *mârkaz* of Simbellawain. This 400-feddan estate, worked by direct cultivation, has been made by its *nâzer*, an Alsatian of good peasant stock who has been living and working there for twenty-seven years, into a paradise of order and health. The fellaheen are lodged in thirty-six small houses varying in size according to the number of children. They are built of red brick, with wooden roofs. The inside is newly white-washed every year. Nothing is kept on the roof, but each family has an adjoining patch of land, defined by an imaginary line, where dry brushwood and manure are heaped. Nobody encroaches on another's space. The labourers are paid three and a half to four piastres more than on neighbouring estates. They are each allowed one or two feddans for their requirements of maize or berseem, and almost every family owns a donkey and a goat, and either a calf or a *gamoossa*. Once a year everyone receives a new garment at the owner's

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
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A PEASANT GROOP *(Ch VI)*

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A village and ferry on the Nile

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With them

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8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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once fixed, he would patiently repeat it four or five times for correction, and proved himself an excellent commentator, in spite of some misconceptions, which, undoubtedly, may have slipped in. He could neither read nor write, which fact I think was, for my purpose, very fortunate; and I was glad, also, that he knew no other language than his own. It is a pleasure to recall the time, when I spent the greater part of my leisure moments, squatting before the low, reed-covered watchman's-hut, built of the stones from the debris of the excavations, while I looked into the alert face of the one-eyed, old man, and talked with him. I wrote down the songs at once in the transliteration. Only in the case of doubtful words, in order to make certain of the consonants, did I employ a scribe to take down the Arabic at Maḥmûds dictation.[1] I hope, therefore, to be able to offer a comparatively reliable Arabic text. Maḥmûd declared decidedly several times, that none of the songs was composed by himself. The title of my book, therefore, must not be misunderstood; it is intended only to state, that it presents the entire fund of songs which Maḥmûd knew. They are songs which are

[1]) It is a veritable cross, that the uneducated scribes, who never pronounce the qāf, either do not write it at all, or indicate it by the alif. Because of this, many words are disfigured beyond recognition. It was a great help to me, to have among our workmen, several from Qufṭ in Upper Egypt, who pronounce the qāf like hard g. In doubtful cases I had them repeat the words in question, and could thus determine the lacking qāfs.

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
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81.

Wind and Love.

The point of this song lies in the double meaning of the word hawa: "wind" and "love".

According to Maḥmûd the situation is as follows: The man is a watchman (ṣafîr) of the Administration of Antiquities in the desert, like Maḥmûd himself.

In a hut made of reeds, he takes shelter against the hawa, the wind. (ll. 1—2). The hut is, however, no protection (l. 3) against the other hawa, love. He has asked a girl to visit him in his tent, but receives the pretty "Schnaderhuepfel"-reply contained in ll. 4—7.

[We have no English equivalent for Schnaderhuepfel, it being a kind of extemporaneous, doggerel rhyme, peculiar to the peasants of the Alpine regions. Transl.]

'Ali 'Elēwe bana-lo fil-gibal iḫṣaṣ,
biddo yeḫāš el-hawa.
Hāwa el-hawa yinḫāš?
Wir-raml lam yin'iriš,
weš-šōk lam yindas,
wil-bint lam tinḫifib,
illa-blammet nās.

'Ali 'Elēwe has built himself huts in the desert;
He wishes to keep off the wind (hawa)
And will he be able to keep off love (hawa)?
But one does not chew sand,
Nor on thorns does one tread,
And the girl will not be wooed
Save in a gathering of people.

82.

The Daughter of the Great.

[339] [563] In many villages there live, besides the fellāḥs, Arabs who have become settled. Inspite of the fact that they are, for the most part, not to be distinguished from the fellāḥs in their mode of living and often not even in their dress, yet the Arabs are very proud of their extraction. They are [576] pleased to be addressed thus: Ja šēḫ el-'arab = "Shēkh of the Arabs".

Bint el-akabir mālya 'ulletha.
taḥt es-selālim šaḫšaḫit libbetha.
šawirtē 'a'li bil-ḥuṣan amsikha.
'amalit amīre, bintē šēḫ el-'orbān.

The daughter of the great filled her water-bottle;
[301] Under the stairway her necklace jingled.
I wanted to take her on my horse
But she held herself proudly, as a woman of rank and daughter of the Shēkh of the Arabs.

[342] [312] 2. The stairway ascends on the outside of the house, and beneath it, in its shade, stands the large water-jar (zīr), in which the day's provision of water is kept.

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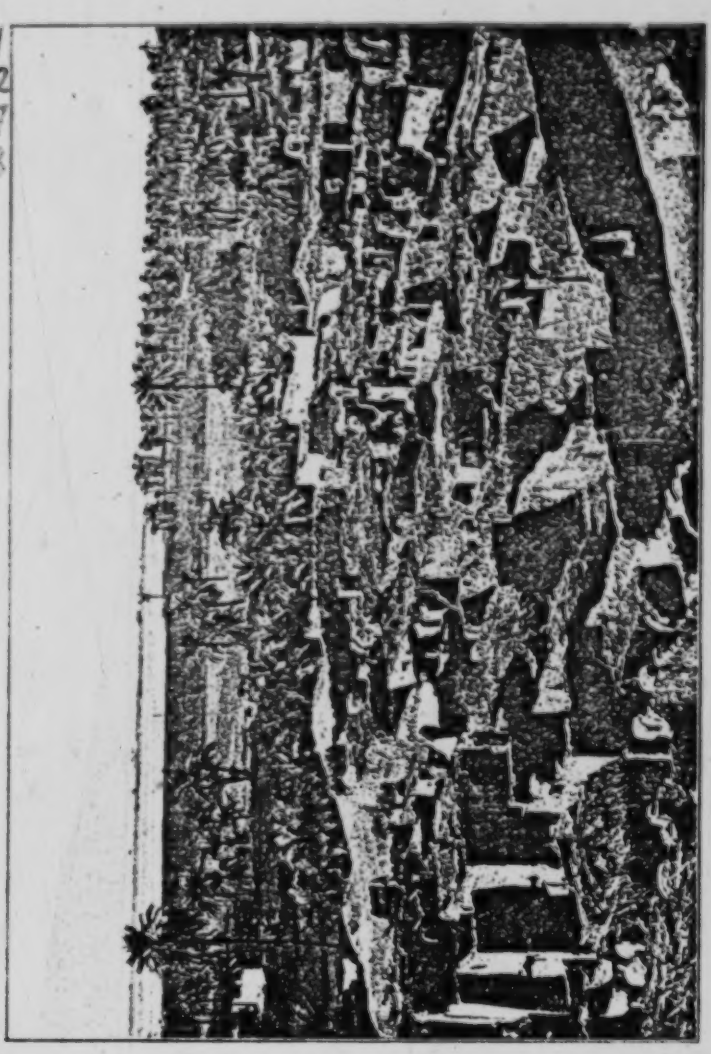

The Village of Edfu in Upper Egypt.

98.

Unnecessary Anxiety. 539x

Dāir tedauwar ʿalēye, ya ḫali, lē?
Ana we-ḥabībi fil-ʿaʿa,
nuʷud saʿa.
Winte zaʿlan lē?

Why dost thou run about looking for me, uncle?
I and my beloved are in the parlor
And shall sit there a while.
Hence why then art thou annoyed?

2. ʿAʿa is the name of the largest room in the harem, which lies in the upper story. For illustration see Lane I Page 18. [342]

[P.108 is blank]

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Invitations.

113.

The girl makes pretense of showing her lover one of the sand-banks which emerge from the Nile, suffer many changes and disappear, according to the season of the year. Here, of course, it is only a cloak (Maḥmūd). 539* 932 [133]

Ya ṭara, ya ḥabībi,
kunte fēn el-yōm?
ša'rak mezabsab,
we-'ēnak sable lin-nōm.
Iṭla' bina 'aṣr 'āli,
ninām we-nīšba' nōm.
wafarragak 'ala-l-gezīre,
illi-tnašet el-yōm.

Where, my beloved,
Hast thou been today?
Thy hair hangs on thy brow
And thine eye is heavy with sleep.
Let us mount a lofty house
And sleep till we are sated with sleep.
And I will show thee the island
Which has formed itself today.

3. Literally: hangs straight down.

5. 'aṣr, literally: castle, designates a solidly built structure with an upper story. Even a house such as the middle class in the cities possess, is, in the country beside the miserable peasant-huts, designated as 'aṣr, "castle" (Vollers). [342] [565]

539a
832
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119.

The Door and the Lover.

Ya bāb, 'ul-li 'ala auwil mesāḥibetak,
ya bāb, 'albi inšabak mi' ḥubbē ṣāḥibetak,
ya bāb, ana kuntē gai-lak ma' ṣiyaḥ ed-dīk,
ya bāb, ana kuntē nawi aḫla'ak warmīk,
ya bāb, ana kuntē nawi aḫla'ak, sibtak.
Ma 'al-li-l-bāb: Ḫalli el-'a'l sakin fīk,
wiš yi'mil el-bāb, lamma ṣaḥbo gafik?
Ma ultē: Ya bāb, gāk ḫafsē bi-muftāḥak,
'iyūn ḥabībi terāi min bēn ilwāḥak.
Ma 'al-li-l-bāb: Wana mā-li ta'tibni,
wiš yi'mil el-bāb, lamma ṣāḥibo zāḥak?
Ma 'ultē: Ya bāb, dana ḍaiyaḥtē 'alē māli,
u-lē ma 'ābilt el-gamīl badri u-hu-māli,
'ul-lo, ḫalli yūfi il-mi'ād!
Illi 'alē si'ān ṣauwamni 'an akl ez-zād.
'asamēn u-billāh, we-ṣōm el-'am yilzamni,
in ma-ḥtaḍa-li-b-waṣlo lasakkano il-alḥad!

"O door, tell me for thy former friendship's sake!
O door, my heart is entangled in love for thy mistress.
O door, I was on the way to thee before the cock crowed. [805] [825]
O door, I intended to lift thee from the hinges and throw thee on the ground.
O door, I intended to lift thee from the hinges, but I have left thee."
What the door said to me: "Let reason dwell in thee!

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What shall a door do, if its mistress treat thee coldly?"
What I said: "O door, mayest thou sink, together with thy key,
The eyes of my beloved are looking between thy boards."
What the door said: "Wherefore dost thou reproach me?
What shall a door do, if its mistress does not want thee?"
What I said: "O door, it is I who have spent all my money for her;
And why have I not met the lovely one, when she went to draw water?
Tell her, to come to the meeting-place at the right time!
She, with the beautiful hips, is to blame that I hunger and eat no bread.
In truth and by Allah, and may a year of fast be laid on me,
If she does not grant me union with her, I will give her lodging in the grave!"

13. Compare the remark on No. 77.

14. In the original it is more realistic, namely: thigh. From love-sickness I do not think of eating.

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133.

A Young Wife and an Old Husband.

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Tiddāni liš-šaīb lē?
Ya-ḥsāret šabābi fi!
Eš-šaīb yešabšabni
we-'aṣato telehlebni.
Sā'at ma-nḫušš el-'ā'a,
yib'a-l-ṛamm meḥauwiṭni.

Why do you give me to the gray-head?
It is a pity to waste my youth on him!
The old man will make me ill,
And his cane will torment me.
When we enter the hall,
Grief will constantly surround me!

3. One must think of superstitious usages which are supposed to incline the young wife's love toward the old man. (Vollers.)

5. The principal room of the house. See No. 98, note [342] on l. 2.